SF ARTS COMMISSION PROCESS FOR REMOVING PUBLIC ART

- The process is called “deaccession.”
    - Deaccession: the formal process of removing accessioned objects permanently from the Civic Art Collection.
- The regulatory system for the San Francisco Arts Commission (SFAC) is titled: “Policies and Guidelines for the Civic Art Collection of the City and County of San Francisco under the Jurisdiction of the San Francisco Arts Commission.”[1]

- Section 7.3.4: Process for Deaccessioning
    - Section 7.3.4.1: Absence of restrictions
        - Before disposing of any objects from the collections, reasonable efforts shall be made to ascertain that the Commission is legally free to do so.
    - Section 7.3.4.1: Arts Commission Staff Report
        - City Attorney’s Opinion: The City Attorney shall be consulted regarding any restrictions that may apply to a specific work.
        - Rationale: An analysis of the reasons for deaccessioning and its impact on the Collection and the artist, and an evaluation of the artwork.
        - Community Opinion: If pertinent, public and agency feedback on the dispensation of work in question. For Monuments and Memorials, develop a public outreach plan.
        - Independent Appraisal or other documentation of the value of the artwork: Before disposition of any object having a value of $10,000 or more, Arts Commission staff should obtain an independent professional appraisal, or an estimate of the value of the work based on recent documentation of gallery and auction sales.
        - Related Professional Opinions: In cases of where deaccessioning or removal is recommended due to deterioration, threat to public safety, ongoing controversy, or lack of artistic quality, it is recommended that the Commission seek the opinions of independent professionals qualified to comment on the concern prompting review (conservators, engineers, architects, critics, safety experts, community members, etc.).
        - History
            - Provide written correspondence, press, and other evidence of public debate.
            - Original Acquisition method and purchase price.
            - For Monuments and Memorials: Historic analysis of subject, artist, and intent.
            - For Monuments and Memorials: Analyze the symbolic impact of location.
            - For Monuments and Memorials: Social and well-being impacts.
            - Options for Disposition.
            - Replacement Costs.

[1]https://www.sfartscommission.org/our-role-impact/about-commission/policies-guidelines/Public-ArtCivic-Art-Collection

- Section 7.3.5 Visual Arts Committee Hearing
    - The Visual Arts Committee will consider the recommendation to deaccession a work of art at its regular or special meeting. The Committee shall make its recommendation to the full Arts Commission.
- Section 7.3.6 Arts Commission Hearing and Resolution
    - The Commission must approve by Resolution the Visual Arts Committee's recommendation that a work of art under its jurisdiction should be deaccessioned.

METHODS FOR PUBLIC INPUT

- The SFAC is required to obtain some form of community opinion during its decision process. Most often, this has taken the form of a public survey, which allowed community members to express their preferences. Additionally, public comment is permitted at the same SFAC hearing where the final vote is taken. The SFAC hearings also allow subject matter experts to weigh in on the decision.
- The Rec and Park Department has held community engagement town halls on issues in the past, but public surveys have been the most utilized tool.

EXAMPLES OF SFAC PREVIOUS DECISIONS

- **Broadway Tunnel Artwork**
    - Amidst plans to remodel the tunnel, a proposal was made to relocate the dragon artwork from its original location in the tunnel to a different position. However, after a survey and public hearing, the community overwhelmingly expressed their desire to see the artwork permanently removed.[2]
    - Public engagement
        - "Dragon Relief Survey"[3]
            - 168 in-person responses
            - 287 online responses
            - 455 total responses
            - 95 open-ended responses
- **Moscone Center West Artwork**
    - Following a public hearing with expert testimony, SFAC voted to remove "Facsimile" in 2014. The electronic display had been broken for some time, and the Commission was concerned about its long-term sustainability. The SFAC hearing featured a robust public comment period, which allowed for representatives of the artist, Moscone Center leadership, and other artists to share their perspective.[4] There is no evidence to suggest a public survey was conducted during this process.

[2] https://www.kqed.org/arts/13938291/sfac-remove-dragon-relief-broadway-tunnel-chinatown
[3] https://media.api.sf.gov/documents/Nov_15_2023_VAC_Slideshow_Final.pdf
[4]https://wayback.archive-it.org/org-571/20220623220330/https://sfgov.org/arts/ftp/meetingarchive/full-commission/sfgov.org/arts/full-commission/meeting/2014-september-8-minutes.html

EXAMPLES OF PUBLIC ART REMOVAL FROM US CITIES

- Examples of public art being removed from cities like Philadelphia, Savannah, Baltimore, etc., are limited outside of civil war-related monuments.
- **Philadelphia**
    - In 2023, city officials announced the removal of a sculpture called “Your Move”, which depicted large board game pieces. The artwork was positioned right outside of Philadelphia City Hall. The explanation given was twofold: the City was planning renovations to that plaza space, and the artwork was in poor condition with high maintenance costs. The decision was made *after* a full review by City officials, which concluded the materials of the artwork were not built to sustain normal wear and tear.[5]
- **Carlsbad**
    - A triangular, waterfront sculpture in Carlsbad, CA, was removed in 1999 following a buildup in public disapproval. The Carlsbad City Council announced that it would hold two sets of public hearings on the future of the artwork, called “Split Pavilion.” After those hearings, the Council decided to put the fate of the sculpture in the hands of the voters by calling a ballot measure. The public voted to remove it, and the art was demolished shortly thereafter. The artist called the public’s decision “pathetic.”[6]

[5] https://news.artnet.com/art-world/philadelphia-your-move-public-art-removal-2312297
[6] https://www.sandiegoreader.com/news/2000/mar/30/locals-colors/